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Nation not ready for Nixon-Ehrlichman

CHICAGO (AP) — John Ehrlichman, top domestic adviser to former President Richard Nixon, said Monday the nation is not ready for Nixon to return to public life.

But Ehrlichman, in his first public appearance since completing a jail term, added that he isn't sure the public is interested in his views either.

Ehrlichman, who lives in Santa Fe, N.M., was in Chicago to promote a daily news commentary radio program that he will do for the Mutual Broadcasting System.

Asked about Nixon's reported plans for a return to public life, including travels to Europe and China, he said the former president probably would like to act as adviser to public officials.

"Nixon would want (Secretary of State) Cyrus Vance and President Carter to be calling and saying, 'We have a problem in Romania,' or 'We're going through a major policy decision in Africa, and we'd like your view,'" Ehrlichman said.

"But I don't think that's in the cards. I don't think people are ready to turn to him for his views," he said.

He said he believed his life "out among the people" has prepared him to comment on national news events. "I have the added advantage of pretty well knowing the Washington story," he said.

Ehrlichman was asked whether he thought some people might consider it best for him also to stay out of the public eye.

"I'm not aware that I'm making money off Watergate as such. If I couldn't carry my own weight as a commentator, I wouldn't do it ... I have to come back to the question of whether I can live with it. That's the last analysis. I'm sure it (the radio program) is worth it on its merits. If I were running around like some kind of freak, that would be another thing. But if people are listening to me because I inform them, that's great," he said.

Mutual president C. Edward Little said Ehrlichman "has been there" and can comment with insight on national affairs.

Ehrlichman was dismissed by Nixon in 1974 in the midst of the scandal that developed over the break-in — by persons connected with Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign — into Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex in Washington.

He was subsequently convicted on federal charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and perjury and was sentenced to serve from one year to four years in jail. He served 18 months.